CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus comprising:

a housing;

a mainboard including memory and a first processor mounted within the housing;

a first network interface having a first network port and a first address connected to the first processor;

at least one expansion slot for receiving a peripheral device: and

a network communications link connecting the first network interface to said at least one expansion slot substantially disposed within the housing,

wherein the first processor is enabled to communicate with a peripheral device having a build-in network interface by transmitting data via the first network interface and the built-in network interface over the network communications link using a network transmission protocol.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a second network interface disposed on the mainboard in proximity to said at least one expansion slot having a second address and a second network port to enable communication between the first processor and a peripheral

device that does not include a built-in network interface when the peripheral device is mounted in one of said at least one expansion slots.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the network communications link comprises a network bus embedded in the mainboard.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the first network interface and the communications link comprise an Ethernet subnet.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:

a second processor; and

a second network interface connected to the second processor and the network communications link to enable communication between the second processor and a peripheral device having a built-in network interface.

6. A system comprising:

a computing machine including a housing and a mainboard to which memory and a first processor are connected, providing a first network interface having a first network port and a first address;

a first peripheral device disposed within the housing;

a second network interface providing a second network port and a second network address linked in communication with the first peripheral device;

a communications link between the first and second network interfaces substantially disposed within the housing; and

software comprising machine instructions that are executable by the first processor that includes a socket application interface (API) that binds the address of the first peripheral device to the second network port and a network interface abstraction layer that provides an abstracted interface that enables an application to communicate with the first peripheral device using a networking protocol.

7. The system of claim 6, wherein the communications link and the first and second network interfaces comprise an Ethernet subnet.

8. The system of claim 6, wherein the communication link comprises a network signal bus built into the mainboard.

9. The system of claim 6, wherein the communications link comprises a token ring.

10. The system of claim 6, wherein the second network interface is built into the first peripheral device;

11. The system of claim 6, wherein the second network interface is built into the mainboard.

12. The system of claim 6, wherein the peripheral device comprises one of a video subsystem, a memory subsystem, a disk controller and a modem.

13. The system of claim 6, wherein the mainboard further includes a second processor connected to a third network interface having a third network address and network port connected to the communications link.

14. A method for enabling communication between a peripheral device disposed within a computing machine having a processor and an application running on the processor, comprising:

providing a network interface for each of the processor and the peripheral device;

providing a communication link between the network interfaces of the processor and the peripheral device;

creating a network socket for each of the processor and the peripheral device;

establishing a connection between the processor and the peripheral device;

generating messages with the application;

transferring the messages between the processor and the peripheral device using a network transmission protocol.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the network transmission protocol comprises the TCP/IP protocol.

17. The method of claim 15, further comprising applying security measures to determine if an application may connect to a particular peripheral device.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the network transmission protocol comprises the UDP protocol.

19. The method of claim 15, wherein the communications link and the network interfaces comprise an internal Ethernet network.

20. The method of claim 15, wherein the communications link and the network interfaces comprise an internal token ring network.